

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 AF-10 SSM-03 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
AID-05 OMB-01 SAB-02 ACDA-07 /103 W
-----111444Z 007503 /16

O R 110824Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3037
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR SY US
SUBJ: SYRIAN MEDIA GIVES CARTER-ASSAD MEETING EXTRAORDINARY
COVERAGE

1. SUMMARY: MEDIA MAY 10 CONCENTRATED ON CARTER-ASSAD MEETING
ALMOST TO EXCLUSION OF OTHER NEWS. FRONT PAGES DAMASCUS DAILIES
COVERED WITH GENEVA STORIES, AND RADIO BROADCASTS DEVOID OF
OTHER NEWS. QUOTES FROM US OFFICIALS HIGHLIGHTED WHICH
LAUDATORY OF ASSAD AND SYRIA'S "IMPORTANT" ROLE. SYRIA
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GENERALLY DEPICTED AS ADHERING TO ITS FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

REGARDING SETTLEMENT. INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN MEETING ALSO
RECEIVED WIDE ATTENTION. COMMENTARIES ON MEETINGS SOMEWHAT
MORE RESERVED THAN NEWS STORIES, AND WHILE WELCOMING US
INTEREST IN PURSUING PEACE EFFORTS, URGED US TO EXERT
GREATER LEVERAGE ON ISRAEL. OVERALL, CARTER-ASSAD MEETING

ALONG WITH ASSAD'S PREVIOUS VISIT TO SOVIET UNION BEING USED TO BOLSTER IMAGE OF ASSAD DOMESTICALLY AND THAT OF BOTH SYRIA AND ASSAD ON INTRA-ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS. END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIAN MEDIA ALL BUT IGNORED OTHER NEWS IN MAY 10 COVERAGE CARTER-ASSAD MEETING. FRONT PAGES OF ALL THREE DAMASCUS DAILIES COVERED WITH STORIES ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF TALKS. MORNING AND AFTERNOON DAMASCUS RADIO NEWS MUCH LONGER THAN USUAL AND DEVOTED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO MEETING, INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO IT, AND UNSCHEDULED CARTER-ASSAD DISCUSSIONS.

3. PRESS HEADLINED VARIOUS QUOTES FROM CARTER AND ASSAD WHICH HIGHLIGHTED ASSAD'S IMPORTANCE TO PEACE EFFORTS, SYRIA'S CHAMPIONING OF ARAB RIGHTS, AND US-SYRIAN COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE EFFORTS FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. BAATH HEADLINED: "PRES. ASSAD: 'THE OUTCOME OF THE PHASE WE HAVE BEGUN IS SUBJECT TO CONTINUING EFFORTS AND CONVICTION THAT PEACE IS BASED ON JUSTICE.' PRES. CARTER: 'WE WILL EXERT ALL EFFORTS TO HELP ACHIEVE JUST SETTLEMENT.'" THAWRA BANNERED CARTER'S STATEMENT CALLING ASSAD "A GREAT LEADER WHO HAS PROMINENT ROLE IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE." TISHRIIN LED WITH ASSAD QUOTE: "CONTINUATION OF OCCUPATION AND EXILE OF AN ENTIRE PEOPLE MEAN CONTINUATION OF GRAVE SITUATION THREATENING THE RENEWAL OF WAR."

4. LEAD ARTICLES FEATURED PRES. CARTER'S STATEMENTS BEFORE BEGINNING OF TALKS THAT PALESTINIANS SHOULD HAVE HOMELAND AND THAT ASSAD GREAT LEADER OF ONE OF THE MAJOR MIDEAST STATES. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A.P. STORY IN WHICH VANCE CALLED ASSAD ONE OF KEY PERSONALITIES OF AREA MENTIONED IN SAME ARTICLES, ALONG WITH FURTHER AP QUOTE CLAIMING ASSAD CAUTIONED THAT ARABS WILL NOT HESITATE TO USE FORCE TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVE OF JUST PEACE. PRESS CARRIED ZUHAYR MUHSIN'S STATEMENTS FROM BEIRUT IN WHICH HE SAID ASSAD GOING TO THIS MEETING FROM POSITION OF STRENGTH AND THAT HE WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO AROUSE AMERICAN SYMPATHY BUT IS GOING WITH THE COMPLETE CONVICTION THAT ISSUE'S MOST IMPORTANT CARDS ARE IN ARAB HANDS, NOT IN THE HANDS OF THE US; ALTHOUGH HE CONCEDED THAT US IS KEY (OUTSIDE) FORCE HAVING MORE INFLUENCE THAN ANYONE ELSE ON THE REGION. MUHSIN NOTED CARTER WAS MEETING ASSAD HALF-WAY BY SCHEDULING MEETING FOR GENEVA, AND MEETING WAS OCCURRING AFTER ASSAD HAD CONSOLIDATED SYRIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS AND AFTER KHADDAM HAD BRIEFED CARTER ON GENERAL OUTLINES OF SYRIAN POLICY.

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AID-05 OMB-01 SAB-02 ACDA-07 /103 W
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O R 110824Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3038

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

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5. OTHER ARTICLES INTERPRETED SEVERAL OF CARTER'S ACTIONS AS HONORING ASSAD, INCLUDING CARTER'S COURTESY CALL ON ASSAD IN HIS SUITE, HIS INVITATION TO ASSAD TO ATTEND WORKING DINNER, AND AMBASSADOR MURPHY'S PRESENCE AT AIRPORT TO GREET ASSAD. NUMBER OF ARTICLES IN PRESS DEVOTED TO CATALOGUING INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN MEETING.

6. COMMENTARIES TOUCHED ON VARIOUS THEMES INCLUDING CLAIMS THAT ASSAD'S MEETING WITH CARTER DREW MORE ATTENTION THAN PREVIOUS SUCH MEETINGS,
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WELCOMING OF US INTEREST AND STATEMENTS OF INTENT TO WORK TOWARDS PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, REMINDERS TO US THAT ITS POLICIES TOWARDS ISRAEL CAN ULTIMATELY DETERMINE OUTCOME OF

PEACE EFFORTS, AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT THAT MEETING WHILE VERY USEFUL MARKS ONLY A START TOWARDS RESOLVING COMPLEX QUESTIONS RELATED TO ME CONFLICT.

7. JIBRAN KURIYYA'S EDITORIAL IN TISHRIIN ENTITLED, "SUCCESSFUL TALKS AND CLEARLY DEFINED GOALS," CHARACTERIZED MEETING AS LARGE SUCCESS FOR SYRIA AND ASSAD. HE CALLED SYRIAN ROLE "DECISIVE" TO ME PEACE EFFORTS. HE CONTINUED IN SAME VEIN SAYING, "WHAT SYRIA ACCEPTS IS WHAT CARRIES POSSIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTATION AND CAN BE TAKEN TO PRACTICAL APPLICATION." HE CLAIMED SYRIAN POLICY IS CHARACTERIZED BY REALISM OF "DEALING WITH THE WORLD AS IT IS" AND NOT WITH ILLUSIONS. HE CAUTIONED IT COULD NOT BE EXPECTED THAT FIRST CARTER-ASSAD MEETING WOULD RESOLVE ALL QUESTIONS CONNECTED WITH ME ISSUE. HE WELCOMED U.S. STATEMENTS OF READINESS TO PROMOTE ME PEACE EFFORTS AND CONCLUDED THAT US AS ONE OF TWO GREAT POWERS AND CO-CHAIRMAN OF GENEVA MEPC CAN PUT "POSITIVE AND EFFECTIVE PRESSURE UPON ISRAEL."

8. AHMAD SHUKRI IN AL-BAATH TOOK MORE SKEPTICAL STANCE CLAIMING THAT UNLESS US TOOK MORE BALANCED ATTITUDE "THE STRONGLY ANTI-PEACE ATTITUDE ADOPTED BY ISRAEL WILL CONTINUE." COLUMN IN THAWRA NONCOMMITAL, MERELY NOTING CONTACTS WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE SO FAR AND WELCOMING US STATEMENTS AT GENEVA "EVEN IF THEY DO NOT GO BEYOND BROAD OUTLINES." HE CHARACTERIZED ASSAD-CARTER MEETINGS AS PROVIDING POINT OF DEPARTURE. HE NOTED US HAD PROMINENT ROLE TO PLAY "IF IT WANTS TO." FINALLY, HE ASSERTED THAT PROBLEM REMAINS COMPLEX, AND "ITS SOLUTION NEEDS INTENSIFIED COOPERATION AND EFFORT ALONG WITH GOOD AND SINCERE INTENTIONS."

9. COMMENT: OVERALL MEDIA COVERAGE LEAVES IMPRESSION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT SARG BELIEVES ASSAD'S DIPLOMACY HAS MADE SYRIA PRE-EMINENT AMONG ARAB PARTIES ENGAGED IN EFFORTS FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ME CONFLICT. MAJOR ATTEMPT HAS BEEN MADE TO EXPLOIT THIS AND PREVIOUS MOSCOW MEETING TO BOOST ASSAD'S STANDING ON DOMESTIC, INTRA-ARAB, AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS. FINALLY. SYRIA PORTRAYING ITSELF AS ONE ARAB STATE CAPABLE OF DEALING IN BALANCED MANNER WITHOUT COMPLEXES WITH BOTH EAST AND WEST.

10. SYRIAN PRESS HAS MADE NO MENTION OF ARAB PLAN FOR PALESTINIAN STATE WHICH ASSAD REPORTEDLY PRESENTED TO PRES. CARTER.
PELLETREAU

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Message Attributes

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